

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior listings of claims in this application:

1. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier ~~for mounting onto a rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door, arrangement,~~ comprising:

~~- a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and~~

~~- an equipment carrier, comprising:~~

~~- a frame having lower engagement means engageable with a engaged with the lower area edge of the vehicle component, wherein engagement of the lower engagement means with the lower edge of the vehicle component prevents upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;~~

~~- a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;~~

~~- at least one support interconnected with the frame above the lower engagement means via an adjustable position engagement arrangement that enables adjustment in the vertical position of the support relative to the frame;~~

~~- at least one vehicle engaging member, connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for engaging carried by and movable with the support, wherein the vehicle engaging member is engaged with the vehicle component at a position above said lower area between the lower edge and the upper edge of the vehicle component;~~

~~- a strap member having upper engagement means for engagement engaged with an the upper area edge of the vehicle component;~~

~~- at least one support that includes strap engaging and tensioning means carried by and movable with the support, wherein said strap member is engaged with the strap engaging and tensioning means and can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper and lower engagement means onto said upper and lower area edges, respectively, of the vehicle component; and~~

~~- an adjustable position engagement arrangement between the frame and the support, wherein the adjustable position engagement arrangement is configured and~~

arranged to enable simultaneous adjustment in the vertical position of the support vehicle engaging member and the strap engaging and tensioning means relative to the frame to be adjusted in order to vary the location of the strap member and the vehicle engaging member relative to the frame; and

- wherein the equipment carrier is maintained in engagement with the movable vehicle component and is movable with the vehicle component between the open and closed positions via engagement of the lower engagement means with the lower edge of the vehicle component, engagement of the upper engagement means of the strap member with the upper edge of the vehicle component, and engagement of the vehicle engaging member with the vehicle component between the upper and lower edges.

2. (Currently Amended) A-The carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 1, wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means comprise a mechanism for holding the strap member in any set position relative to said support, a strap tensioning member for applying tension to said strap member, and a release control member for releasing said mechanism in order to enable free movement of the strap member relative to said support.

3. (Currently Amended) A-The carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 2, wherein said mechanism is a ratchet mechanism.

4. (Currently Amended) A-The carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 1, wherein said vehicle engaging member ~~for engaging the vehicle component~~ is mounted to said support via a pivot connection.

5. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier ~~for mounting onto a rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door arrangement~~, comprising:
a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and

an equipment carrier, comprising:

_____ - a frame having lower engagement means engageable with a engaged with the lower area edge of the vehicle component, wherein the lower engagement means prevents upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

10 _____ - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

15 - at least one support interconnected with the frame above the lower engagement means;

15 _____ - at least one vehicle engaging member ~~for engaging secured to the support, wherein the vehicle engaging member is engaged with the vehicle component at a position above said lower area between the lower edge and the upper edge of the vehicle component;~~

20 _____ - a strap member having upper engagement means for engagement with ~~an~~the upper area ~~edge~~ of the vehicle component;

25 _____ - ~~at least one support connected to the frame or forming part thereof, provided with strap engaging and tensioning means secured to the support, wherein said strap member is secured to said strap engaging and tensioning means and wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper and lower engagement means onto said upper and lower edges, respectively, of the vehicle component; and~~

30 _____ - wherein the vehicle engaging member is secured to the support such that the support is located between the frame and the vehicle engaging member; and

30 _____ - wherein the equipment carrier is maintained in engagement with the movable vehicle component and is movable with the vehicle component between the open and closed positions via engagement of the lower engagement means with the lower edge of the vehicle component, engagement of the upper engagement means of the strap member with the upper edge of the vehicle component, and engagement of the vehicle engaging member with the vehicle component between the upper and lower edges.

6. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 5, wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means is in the form of strap winding means.

7. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 6, wherein the strap winding means comprises a mechanism for holding the strap winding means in any set condition, a strap tensioning member for controlling the mechanism in order to apply a tension to the strap member, and a release control member to release the mechanism in order 5 to enable unwinding of the strap member from said strap winding means.

8. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 7, wherein said mechanism is a ratchet mechanism.

9. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 5, wherein said support defines an interior within which the strap is stored in a wound configuration by the strap engaging means.

10. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier ~~for mounting onto a movable rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door arrangement,~~ comprising:

5 a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and

an equipment carrier, comprising:

10 _____ - a frame having an upper portion and a lower portion, wherein the lower portion of the frame terminates in includes a lower hook arrangement that is configured to engage a engaged with the lower edge defined by of the movable vehicle component, wherein the frame and the lower hook arrangement are configured such that engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component is operable to rigidly connect the lower portion of the frame to the movable vehicle component and prevent upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

15 _____ - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

20 _____ - at least one vehicle engaging member, connected to the frame or forming part thereof, wherein the vehicle engaging member is located above the lower hook arrangement and is configured to engage engaged with the movable vehicle component at a position above said lower edge of the movable vehicle component, wherein the vehicle engaging member is interconnected with the frame via a pivot connection that defines a transverse pivot axis; and

25 _____ - a strap member interconnected with the frame via a strap member support, wherein the strap member includes upper engagement means for engagement with an engaged with the upper edge defined by the movable vehicle component;

_____ - strap engaging and tensioning means carried by the frame, wherein said strap member is secured to said strap engaging and tensioning means and wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can be controlled for tensioning the strap member in

order to tighten said upper engagement means onto said upper edge of the vehicle component;

- wherein the vehicle engaging member is interconnected with the frame via a pivot connection that defines a transverse pivot axis, wherein, when the carrier is mounted on the vehicle by engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the movable vehicle component and engagement of the strap member upper engagement means with the upper edge of the movable vehicle component, with the vehicle engaging member engaged with the movable vehicle component at a location therebetween, tensioning the strap member via the strap engaging and tensioning means induces a tilting action on said frame around said transverse pivot axis which causes the lower hook arrangement of said frame to be urged against the lower edge of the movable vehicle component so as to clamp the movable vehicle component between the upper engagement means of the strap member and the lower hook arrangement of the frame;

- wherein the equipment carrier is maintained in engagement with the movable vehicle component and is movable with the vehicle component between the open and closed positions via engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the vehicle component, engagement of the upper engagement means of the strap member with the upper edge of the vehicle component, and engagement of the vehicle engaging member with the vehicle component between the upper and lower edges.

11. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 10, wherein said vehicle engaging member is in form of a rocking member having a mid portion pivotally supported around said pivot axis by said frame and two end portions to which vehicle engaging feet are pivotally connected.

12. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 11, wherein said rocking member is U-shaped.

13. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 10, wherein the lower hook arrangement is interconnected with a forwardly facing end defined by the lower portion of said frame so as to be able to perform a limited rotation with respect to said forwardly facing end.

14. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 12, wherein said frame includes at least one upright section, and wherein said strap member

support is mounted on said upright section by connecting means enabling an adjustment of the position of said support along said upright section.

15. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 14, wherein each upright section has spaced indentations selectively engageable by said connecting means.

16. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 14, wherein said connecting means comprises clamp means carried by said support and adapted to be tightened around said upright section at any position thereof by means of a tightening screw.

17. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 16, wherein each upright section has a forwardly facing flat surface engageable by said tightening screw of said clamp means in order to prevent rotation of the support relative to the upright section.

18. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 16, wherein said support has a supporting structure in form of a U-bent metal sheet surrounding a rearwardly facing portion of the upright section and having two cut-away portions defining said clamp means, which are engageable by said tightening screw forwardly of said upright section.

19. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 10, wherein said frame comprises a pair of upright ~~seetion~~ sections and a cross member extending therebetween, and wherein the structure for carrying the one or more items of equipment is interconnected with said cross-member via an array of angularly spaced axial ridges arranged around the cross-member and extending longitudinally therealong, and wherein the structure for carrying the one or more items of equipment includes at least one equipment carrying arm having a hub section with an inner surface having an array of longitudinal angularly spaced teeth which are engageable with said ridges, to connect said arm to said cross-member at different desired orientations.

20. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 19, wherein said ridges are formed on an engagement member surrounding said cross-member.

21. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 20, wherein said engagement member surrounding the cross-member has a split construction.

22. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 19, wherein said hub section has a split construction.

23. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 3, wherein said support has a through passage through which said strap member is engaged, said strap member having a series of one-way teeth, and wherein said ratchet mechanism includes a toothed strap retainer pivotally mounted to said support and elastically biased to a position in which its teeth engage the teeth of the strap member, so as to enable movement of the strap member in a tensioning direction and prevent movement of the strap member in a direction opposite the tensioning direction.

5 24. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 23, wherein said strap tensioning member is in form of a tensioning lever pivotally mounted on said support and having a series of one-way teeth engageable with said teeth of the strap member, said lever being operable to have an active tensioning movement from a first position to a second position, where it causes tensioning of the strap member, and an inactive return movement from the second position to the first position, during which the strap retainer holds the strap member in the previously reached position.

5 25. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 24, wherein said release control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move said strap retainer away from its position engaging the strap member.

26. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 23, wherein said support has a split construction.

27. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 8, wherein said strap winding means ~~include~~ includes a strap winding roller rotatably mounted to said support, on which the strap member can be wound, and wherein said ratchet mechanism includes at least one ratchet wheel carried by said winding roller and having a series of one-way teeth, and a retainer having a series of teeth which is pivotally mounted to said support and elastically biased to a position in which the teeth of the retainer engage the teeth of the ratchet wheel, so as to enable a rotation of the wheel in a strap winding tensioning direction and preventing an opposite rotation of the wheel.

28. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 27, wherein said strap tensioning member is in form of a lever pivotally mounted on said support

and provided with a toothed pawl pivotally connected to said tensioning lever and elastically biased to a position in which it engages the teeth of the ratchet wheel, said lever being

5 operable to have an active movement from a first position to a second position, in which said pawl causes rotation of the ratchet wheel in the strap winding tensioning direction, and an inactive return movement from the second position to the first position, during which the retainer holds the ratchet wheel in the previously reached position.

| 29. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 28, wherein said release control member is in form of a trigger member which can be actuated in order to move said retainer away from its position engaging the ratchet wheel.

| 30. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 24, wherein said support is mounted on an upright section forming part of the carrier frame, and wherein said tensioning lever is pivotally mounted to said support around an axis located forwardly of said upright section, and has a body extending rearwardly of the upright section, with a through passage through which the upright section is arranged.

| 31. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 30, wherein said release control member is in form of a trigger member arranged on said support forwardly of the upright section and operable by pulling it rearwardly.

| 32. (Currently Amended) An equipment carrier arrangement ~~for mounting onto a movable rear component of a vehicle structure, such as a vehicle trunk lid or door that is movable relative to the vehicle between an open position and a closed position,~~ comprising:

5 a movable rear vehicle component defining an upper edge and a lower edge, wherein the movable vehicle component is movable between an open position and a closed position; and

an equipment carrier, comprising:

10 _____ - a frame having a lower portion that terminates in ~~includes~~ a lower hook arrangement that is engageable engaged with a ~~the~~ lower edge defined by ~~of~~ the movable vehicle component, wherein the lower hook arrangement prevents upward movement of the frame relative to the vehicle component;

_____ - a structure connected to the frame or forming part thereof, for carrying one or more items of equipment;

15 ____ - at least one pivotable vehicle engaging member carried by the frame
and located above the lower hook arrangement, connected to the frame or forming a part
thereof, for engaging wherein the vehicle engaging member is engaged with the vehicle
component at a position above said lower edge of the movable vehicle component,

20 ____ - a strap member having an upper hook arrangement for
engagement engaged with an the upper edge defined by the movable vehicle component,

____ - at least one support connected to the frame or forming part thereof,
provided with strap engaging and tensioning means which are permanently engaged by said
strap member, so thatwherein said strap member constitutes an integral part of said carrier
arrangement, whereby said carrier arrangement can be mounted on a vehicle with no need of
25 additional separate strap members, and wherein said strap engaging and tensioning means can
be controlled for tensioning the strap member in order to tighten said upper engagement
means onto said upper edge of the vehicle component; and

30 ____ - wherein, when the carrier arrangement is secured to the movable
vehicle component by engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of the
movable vehicle component, engagement of the upper hook arrangement with the upper edge
of the movable vehicle component, and engagement of the pivotable vehicle engaging
member with the movable vehicle component at a location between the upper and lower
edges of the movable vehicle component, the carrier arrangement is maintained in
engagement with the movable vehicle component and is movable along with the movable
35 vehicle component when the movable vehicle component is moved between the open position
and a closed position via engagement of the lower hook arrangement with the lower edge of
the movable vehicle component, engagement of the upper hook arrangement with the upper
edge of the movable vehicle component, and engagement of the pivotable vehicle engaging
member with the movable vehicle component at a location between the upper and lower
40 edges of the movable vehicle component.

33. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 19,
wherein said equipment carrying structure is selected among a number of different structures
adapted to carry different items of equipment, such as bicycles, skis, snowboards, pieces of
luggage.

34. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 1,
wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects

upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the
5 upright sections and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

| 35. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 5,
wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the
5 upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.

| 36. (Currently Amended) A carrier arrangement as set forth in claim 10,
wherein said frame includes a pair of upright sections, a cross-member which interconnects upper ends defined by said upright sections and is provided with means for mounting the equipment-carrying structure, curved lower sections extending from the lower ends of the
5 upright sections, and terminating in forwardly facing ends, and a hook carrying member mounted to each of said forwardly facing ends and including a hook, wherein each hook is configured to engage a lower edge defined by the vehicle component.